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Room 228, SA-6
Department of State
Washington, D.C. 20520

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March 24, 1986

Mr. Mario Calero
3233 Illinois Avenue
Kenner, LA 70065

Dept. of State, RPS/IPS, Margaret P. Grafeld, Dir.
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Date 2/22/02 Exemption _____

Dear Mr. Calero:

During a recent visit to Nicaraguan democratic resistance base camps, Congressional staff members and other USG representatives examined supplies delivered to the democratic resistance forces by direct flights from the US to the region. Several types of equipment and clothing examined were discovered to be poorly made or otherwise deficient.

1. Boots: Three types of boots arrived on recent NHAO flights, none of which appeared to be US military specification (milspec) jungle boots. This is an important point because the justification for purchasing boots in the US rather than in the region was the durability of US milspec boots. The three types shipped were:

a. A leather boot with panama sole and padded insert around the top, with plastic or metal eyelets riveted to the leather. These boots were described by democratic resistance personnel as poorly sewn and the eyelets were very prone to pull out. The all-leather construction made the boots very hot, and consequently few have been issued.

b. A leather boot of more conventional design, also with panama sole. Although these boots appeared to be better quality than the other all-leather boots, the USG representatives did not see any being worn; the point is that they are not jungle boots.

c. A jungle boot of milspec appearance, some of which are stamped "spike protective", and with nylon ventilation inserts. These boots were issued in large quantities, and according to FDN personnel, five percent of these boots separated along the outside bottom between the sole and the upper, after four to eight days of wear. The boots that separated did not appear to have been sewn, only glued. The ventilation fixtures in the instep portion had

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a tendency to pull out. Since these boots are still being issued and few have accumulated more than three weeks of wear, the sole separation problem may get worse. In several samples, the boots were shipped with sides separated from the sole.

2. Canteen covers: Canteen covers were not milspec and have no drain hole in the bottom, which could result in rapid rotting. Construction was of lightweight canvas cloth rather than milspec nylon or surplus heavy canvas.

3. Belts: Numerous items shipped as web belts were actually strips of nylon webbing which did not fit belt buckles and were too limp to function effectively as a belt for trousers. The equipment belts (load carrying) appeared to be adequate.

4. Backpacks: The backpacks shipped were not milspec "alice" packs, but rather nylon copies. The body of these packs appeared adequate, although there was single rather than double stitching in places and therefore it would be unlikely that they would be as durable as milspec packs. The biggest problem with these packs was the very thin, permanently attached shoulder straps (the milspec alice pack has wider, detachable straps).

A small nylon pack, apparently known as a "contra pack", was also inspected. According to democratic resistance leaders, they have repeatedly asked their purchaser not to purchase such packs because they are too small to be useful.

5. Rain Ponchos: There was wide variation in rain ponchos. Some were made of light nylon material with backing which was not waterproof. Other samples had velcro attachment points rather than metal snaps and grommets.

6. Poncho liners: Poncho liners examined appeared to be heavier and bulkier than standard liners, and had no markings indicating that they were milspec.

7. Underwear: Unissued samples appeared adequate, but may have been seconds.

8. Tents: Tents shipped with medical equipment for storage were used surplus and had unpatched tears and holes. (These were supplied by Project Hope.)

9. Other: Suspenders and ammo pouches appeared adequate.

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As you can see, there are some serious questions about the quality of equipment which has been procured with NHAO funds for the Nicaraguan democratic resistance. NHAO is very concerned about these reports and would like your assessment of them as soon as possible. Using this summary and the samples which Mr. Buechler sent you last week, we hope you can identify the suppliers of this equipment, after which we wish urgently to discuss with you appropriate remedial actions.

Sincerely,

R.W. Duemling
Robert W. Duemling
Director

cc: EValdivia, UNO Miami
SStadthagen, UNO Liaison

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